

Job 31:28

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

This also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge: for I should have denied the God that is above.

Analysis

This also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge (גַּם־הוּא עוֹן פְּלִילִי, gam-hu avon pelili)—avon (עוֹן) means iniquity or guilt, while pelili (פְּלִילִי) refers to judicial punishment by a judge. Job recognizes that idolatry is a legal offense deserving punishment. **For I should have denied the God that is above** (כִּי־לֹאֶל מִמָּעַל כִּכְשַׁשְׁתִּי לֵאלֹהִים, ki-kichashti la'El mima'al)—the verb kachash (כִּכְשַׁשׁ) means to deny, lie about, or disown. Job understands that worshiping creation denies the Creator.

This theological principle appears throughout Scripture: idolatry is covenant violation, spiritual adultery against Yahweh (Exodus 20:3-5, Jeremiah 3:20). From a Reformed perspective, Job's reasoning demonstrates proper covenant theology. Idolatry isn't merely one sin among many but denial of God's exclusive right to worship. The first commandment grounds all others. To worship anything besides God is to declare He isn't supreme. Job recognizes that astral worship would constitute judicial guilt requiring divine punishment—the very thing his friends wrongly claimed explained his suffering.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern law codes prescribed death for covenant violations. Israel's law mandated death for idolatry (Deuteronomy 17:2-7). Job's recognition that idolatry deserves judicial punishment reflects covenant theology predating Mosaic law. His phrase 'God that is above' (El mima'al) emphasizes divine transcendence—

God is above creation, not part of it. This monotheistic confession distinguished Israel from polytheistic neighbors.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing idolatry as 'denying God' deepen our understanding of its seriousness?
2. What does Job's theological reasoning teach about the relationship between worship and truth claims about God?
3. How should understanding that idolatry is a judicial offense affect how we view subtle forms of divided loyalty?

Interlinear Text

גַּם	ה וְאֵל	עוֹלָם	פְּלִיל י	כִּי
H1571	H1931	H5771	H6416	H3588
This also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge				
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כִּי שָׁתִּי	לֹא לֵאלֹהִים	מִמֶּנּוּ		
H3584	H410	H4605		
for I should have denied the God that is above				

Additional Cross-References

Job 31:11 (Judgment): For this is an heinous crime; yea, it is an iniquity to be punished by the judges.

Joshua 24:27 (References God): And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the LORD which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God.

